



**Analysis of Potential Municipal Purchase
of the Ellington Airport**

Town of Ellington

Final Report



FEASIBILITY STUDY

for

Analysis of Municipal Purchase of the Ellington Airport by the Town of Ellington

October 2010

Prepared For:
Town of Ellington

Prepared By:
CHA, Inc.
Albany, NY

In Association With:
RKG Associates, Inc.
Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ellington Airport is located in the Town of Ellington, Connecticut, and is currently owned by JLM Associates, LLC, a privately-owned. The Town has conducted a feasibility study to investigate the potential municipal purchase of the Airport, with financial assistance from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT). The study reviewed various physical, environmental, and financial considerations of municipal airport ownership, as summarized below.

The existing airport property consists of approximately 125 acres. This study overview is organized into the following sections:

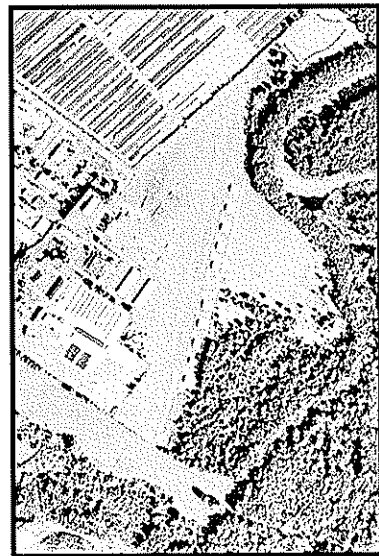
- Overall Airport Evaluation
- Financial Feasibility Summary
- Redevelopment Analysis
- Recommended Airport Management Structure
- Recommendation for Acquisition
- Implementation Plan

Overall Airport Evaluation

As a privately-owned facility, Ellington Airport provides a basic level of service which supports the current aviation demand, including recreational, flight training, personal, and business-use. If acquired by the Town of Ellington, the Airport would require several capital projects to be brought into compliance with the FAA's minimum design standards.

The study included substantial review of the existing airport facilities, current conditions, and development potential. It is noted that no additional facilities would be needed for the Airport to service as a Town of Ellington municipal facility. However, pavement maintenance is currently required and major airfield rehabilitation should be scheduled within the next five years.

The existing airport hangars and facilities are in fair condition. Along with regular maintenance, some of the facilities require repairs for safety and structural reasons.



Financial Feasibility Summary

The analysis evaluated the future financial conditions of the Airport under Town ownership. The analysis forecasted potential airport revenues, expenditures, and expected capital improvement costs over the next 12 years. Under Town ownership, with current activity levels and required

airport improvements, the financial analysis of Ellington Airport shows a negative net cash flow. Table ES-1 highlights the results of the baseline financial analysis of the Airport, as well as the potential lost tax levy.

TABLE ES-1 – FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS (Scenario 1 - Baseline)				
Revenue & Expenditure	2010	2015	2020	2022
Total Revenue	\$119,540	\$138,391	\$161,365	\$171,094
Operating Expenditures	89,320	103,856	120,854	128,441
Capital Expenditures	51,757	30,482	35,337	37,489
Total Expenditures	141,077	134,338	156,191	165,930
Net Cash Flow	-21,537	4,053	5,174	5,164
Lost Tax Levy	25,519	29,583	34,295	36,384
Net Balance	(\$47,056)	(\$25,530)	(\$29,121)	(\$31,220)

As shown in the table, the Airport is expected to generate annual revenues of approximately \$171,000 by 2022, with associated expenditures estimated at \$166,000. The projected net cash flow for the Airport is positive after the initial acquisition cost in 2010. However, when the loss of existing property tax revenue is considered, the financial forecast would be considered negative. The following points summarize the relevant major findings:

- A total of three airport operational scenarios were reviewed to identify potential cost effective approaches to municipal ownership.
- Based on the study assumptions, only the Baseline and Growth scenarios show a positive annual net cash flow beyond the initial acquisition cost in year 2010.
- An overall negative financial outcome is anticipated due to the loss of property tax revenue, regardless of the scenario. However, this potential subsidy is minor and the Airport would appear to operate at a “break-even” level.
- Acquisition of the Airport involves a degree of financial “risk” and is dependent on stability in aviation demand, which may be affected by fuel prices, aircraft maintenance, and acquisition costs.
- The Airport provides a modest economic benefit to the Town and region.

Recommended Airport Management Structure

With the goal of minimizing expenses, if Ellington Airport was acquired by the Town, daily airport management and operation is recommended to be completed by a fixed base operator

(FBO). Specific management and operational duties would be defined and incorporated in a lease agreement.

Nevertheless, the Town would still be required to oversee the management duties, implement airport projects, and retain oversight and responsibility for the airport facilities.

Recommendation for Acquisition

The municipal purchase of Ellington Airport decision should be made with an understanding the Town's goals and financial expectations. There are several advantages and disadvantages to acquisition of Ellington Airport as shown below.

TABLE ES-2 ACQUISITION ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Control over Future of Airport• Public Benefits (recreational, training, business, charity)• Preservation of Transportation Infrastructure• Modest Economic Development Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Subsidy may be needed when Property Taxes are Considered• Additional Town Staff Responsibilities• Financial Risk

At this time no formal recommendation has been formulated regarding the acquisition of Ellington Airport. This recommendation (in favor or against) will be presented following comments from Town Council, residents and interested organizations. However, the ultimate recommendation of the study will be advisory in nature. The actual decision to purchase the Airport will remain with the Council (or by referendum, if required by statute). With the completion of the initial feasibility study, the Town's current decision (June 2010) is whether to continue with additional acquisition review / study or to end consideration of acquiring the Airport.

Implementation Plan

Table ES-3 below lists key steps or action-items in the potential acquisition of Ellington Airport. The list includes activities and decision points in the overall process. At any point in the process, the Town can terminate consideration of airport acquisition.

TABLE ES-3 – IMPLMENTATION PLAN		
Action Item	Activity	Tentative Timeframe
A	Complete Airport Study – Phase I	Summer 2010
B	Town determines whether to continue investigation of the acquisition of Ellington Airport	Summer 2010
C	Town applied for Phase II Study grant (from FAA)	Summer 2010
D	Conduct Phase II Study (Environmental Testing and Appraisals)	Sept - March 2011
E	Town determines whether to acquire airport	Fall 2011
F	Negotiate acquisition price	Fall 2011
G	Public Referendum (if necessary)	Fall 2011
H	Secure funding, negotiate management & lease agreement(s)	2012/ 2013
I	Acquire Airport	2012 / 2013

Based on the need for additional study and the grant application process, this schedule is considered the shortest feasible timeframe for the acquisition of Ellington Airport.

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Ellington Airport (7B9) is located in the Town of Ellington, Tolland County, Connecticut. The Airport is open to the public, and is owned by J.L.M Associates, LLC (JLM) a privately-owned company. JLM has agreed to participate in a Potential Municipal Purchase Feasibility Study by the Town of Ellington.

As a “general aviation” (GA) facility, Ellington Airport serves private, corporate, and charter aircraft. Scheduled airline service is not permitted at GA facilities. Visitors to the area traveling on airlines arrive primarily at Hartford’s Bradley International Airport (approximately 10 miles to the west).

General aviation airports, such as Ellington Airport, may be included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems¹ (NPIAS) if they account for sufficient activity. The 2,500 GA airports in the NPIAS have an average of 33 based aircraft and account for 40 percent of the Nation's GA fleet. GA Airports included in the NPIAS are eligible to receive federal grants for airport improvements. Ellington Airport is not currently included in the NPIAS as a general aviation airport, but would be added if it was acquired and operated by the Town.

Once a NPIAS airport accepts federal grants, it becomes obligated to remain open as an airport for at least 20 years. To date, Ellington Airport has not accepted any federal grants, and thus, has no obligation to remain open as an airport. In an effort to maintain Ellington Airport as a regional transportation/aviation resource, the Town of Ellington decided to undertake this study to evaluate the potential municipal purchase of the facility (in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration).

This study consists of a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits associated with the potential purchase of Ellington Airport by the Town of Ellington, including a review of various physical, environmental, and financial considerations. The findings and recommendations of this study provide the Town of Ellington with the necessary information to make a decision regarding the potential purchase of the Airport.

¹ The NPIAS identifies more than 3,300 airports that are significant to national air transportation and thus eligible to receive Federal grants under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The NPIAS comprises commercial service airports, reliever airports, and selected GA airports. NPIAS eligibility criteria are detailed in FAA Order 5090.3C, *Field Formulation of the NPIAS*.

1.0 AIRPORT INSPECTION & REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the existing facilities and characteristics at Ellington Airport, and summarizes the findings and recommendations of the airside, structural, and environmental reviews. This information is presented in the following sections:

- Airport Inventory
- Airside Facility & Pavement Inspection
- Structural Building Assessment
- Environmental Review
- Security Evaluation
- Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting
- Airport Activity

1.1 Airport Inventory

Airport facilities are often described as either airside or landside. Airside (or airfield) facilities include those directly used by aircraft during takeoff and landing, such as runways, taxiways, lighting, and instrumentation. Landside facilities include support buildings and structures, such as aircraft hangars and parking (tiedown) aprons, automobile parking lots, and access roads. The existing airside and landside facilities at Ellington Airport are summarized below and illustrated on Figure 1-1. These facilities are contained within 125 acres on a single tax parcel, currently owned by J.L.M. Associates, LLC (JLM).

Airside Facilities Overview

Runway 1-19 is the main airside facility at Ellington Airport. The runway extends 1,800 feet in length and 50 feet in width on a north-south alignment. The runway is served by a full length, parallel taxiway with exits at either end of the runway. The runway and taxiway pavement is suitable for small aircraft and was last resurfaced in the early 1990's.

Runway 1-19 is equipped with non-standard Low Intensity Runway Lights (LIRL) and a lighted windsock mounted on the office/flight school building.

Pilots may fly under two different flight rules depending on flight type and weather; Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). Assuming the weather is above the minimums specified by the FAA, a majority of the pilots flying into Ellington Airport are flying VFR. If the weather deteriorates, pilots must fly under IFR. Under IFR, an instrument approach is required to land at an airport for safety reasons. There is currently no approved instrument approach (IAP) to Runway 1-19; the runway length is below that required to establish an instrument approach.



Landside Facilities Overview

The landside facilities at Ellington Airport consist of three small hangars, an office building, two conventional hangars, and apron area. Table 1-1 summarizes the Airport's existing landside facilities (see Figure 1-1). The fuel farm consists of a 10,000 gallon, underground storage tank for aircraft gasoline (AVGAS) and a 2,000 aboveground storage tank containing Jet-A fuel for the turboprop aircraft of the skydiving operation.

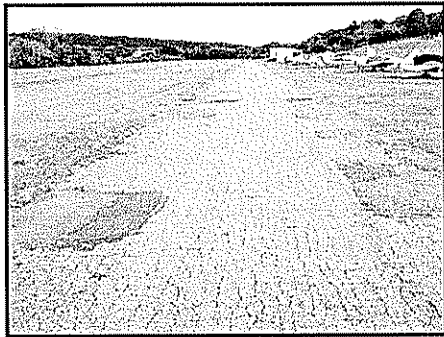
TABLE 1-1 – EXISTING LANDSIDE FACILITIES		
Airside Facility	Figure 1-1 Label	Ownership
Helicopter School	1	JLM Associates
Aircraft Maintenance	2	JLM Associates
Office Building	3	JLM Associates
Auto Mechanic	5	JLM Associates
Skydiving Facilities	4	CT Parachuters, Inc.
Private Storage	6	Private Individual
Private Hangar #1	7	Private Individual
Private Hangar #2	7	Private Individual
Private Hangar #3	7	Private Individual
All land is owned by JLM Associates, LLC		

1.2 Airside Facility & Pavement Inspection

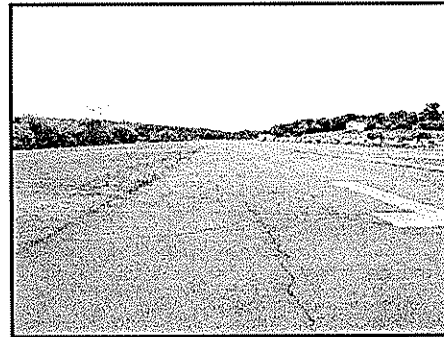
A visual inspection of the existing airside facilities and paved areas at Ellington Airport was performed on October 2, 2009. Appendix A provides a detailed overview of the inspection findings and describes the current condition of each facility. A summary of the findings and preliminary recommendations is provided in Table 1-2 below.

TABLE 1-2 – EXISTING CONDITIONS OF PAVED AREAS			
Airside Facility	Condition	Issues	Short-Term Recommendation
Runway 1-19	Fair to Poor	Longitudinal/Transverse/Alligator Cracking; Localized Settlements	Repair Cracking
Taxiway	Poor	Severe Alligator Cracking; Pavement Deterioration; Patching	Full-depth Reconstruction
Main Apron	Fair to Poor	Longitudinal/Transverse/Alligator Cracking; Localized Settlements; Localized Deterioration	Mill & Overlay with Settlement Repair
Lighting & Nav aids	Fair	No Segmented Circle for Wind Indicator	Paved Segmented Circle
Markings & Signage	Poor	Pavement Marking in Poor Condition; No Airfield Signage	Repaint Markings
Vehicle Parking Areas	Good	Minor Longitudinal/Transverse Cracking; Ponding Water	Seal Joints
Driveways	Fair	Unsealed Pavement Joint; Alligator Cracking; Localized Deterioration	Seal Joints & Repair Cracking

For the short-term, with the exception of the taxiway, all of the Airport's paved areas should be repaired with crack sealing or other minor rehabilitation. However, all paved areas will require reconstruction, or at the minimum a "mill & overlay," within the next 10 years. The Airport completed a runway sealant project in June 2008 as a short-term solution.



Taxiway Alligator Cracking



Runway Transverse Cracking

Appendix A identifies additional airside recommendations, including:

- Install lighting consistent with FAA Standards
- Paved segmented circle
- Install runway signage
- Paint runway and taxiway markings
- Existing drainage system maintenance

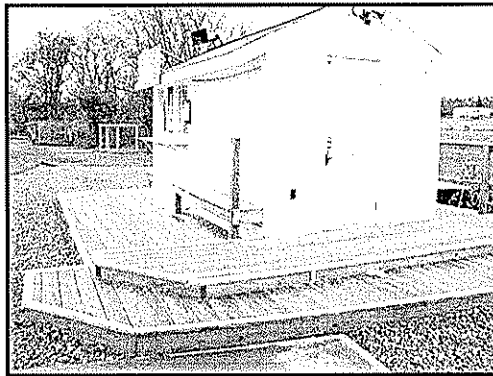
Overall, the Airport's airside facilities and paved areas are in fair to poor condition. The recommendations are typical for an airport of this size and character, and would be eligible for FAA funding (under Town ownership of the Airport). The Airport Capital Improvement Plan (Section 2.3) lists the phasing and cost estimates.

1.3 Structural Building Assessment

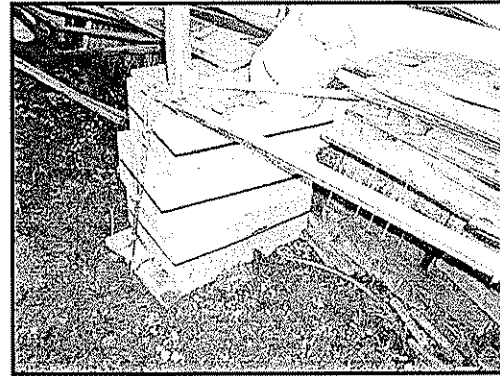
A visual assessment of the existing structures at Ellington Airport was performed on October 27, 2009. Appendix B provides a detailed overview of the assessment findings and describes the current condition of each structure. A summary of the findings and preliminary recommendations is provided in Table 1-3 below.

TABLE 1-3 – CONDITION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES			
Facility	Figure 1-1 Label	Condition	Short-Term Recommendations
Helicopter School	1	Fair	Repair Corrosion & Roof Leak & Install Gutters
Auto Mechanic	5	Fair	Repair Corrosion
Aircraft Maintenance	2	Fair	Repair Corrosion & Dents
Office Building	3	Fair	Repair Exterior Deterioration
Skydiving Facilities	4	Fair	Replace Deteriorated Wood & Install Handrails on Bridges
Private Storage	6	Poor	Replace Deteriorated Elements & Install Gutters
Private Hangar #1	7	Fair	Repair Torn Fabric
Private Hangar #2	7	Good	None
Private Hangar #3	7	Poor	Rebuild Foundation Piers

As shown in Table 1-3, most of the structures at Ellington Airport are in fair condition and require minor repairs. Many of the repairs recommended are to repair the existing damage from corrosion and to prevent future corrosion. Unless JLM completes repairs on the buildings prior to the sale of the Airport, the Town would need to fund the preliminary repair costs. The Airport Capital Improvement Plan (Section 2.3) lists the phasing, cost estimates, and funding source for each recommendation. The costs of the building repairs could potentially be included in the purchase agreement.



Sky Diving Facility



Hangar Support Beams

1.4 Environmental Review

This section provides a preliminary review of the environment surrounding Ellington Airport, including a discussion of land use and zoning, endangered and threatened species, historic and cultural resources, and wetlands. The information below will be considered during the Airport Development Review (Chapter 2). A more detailed environmental review is provided in Appendix G. Figure 1-2 provides a location map of the Airport and surrounding area.

Land Use & Zoning

Ellington Airport is located in the Town of Ellington, within an Industrial (I) zoning district and has a designated land use of Airfield. Land uses surrounding the airport include light industrial, residential, and active agricultural. Light industrial uses are concentrated east of the airport along the western side of Route 83 as well as to the southeast along Industrial Park Road. Single family residences are found predominantly west of the airport in a neighborhood defined by Bridge Street, Randy Road, and Gloria Lane but also exist northeast and east of the airport along the western side of Route 83. A small development of multi-family residential dwellings (Meadow Brook Apartments) is also located south of the airport along Industrial Park Road. Active agricultural fields are the most notable land use in the vicinity of the airport as cornfields are located to the north, west, and south of the runway.

The FAA encourages airports to own or control all property within Runway Protection Zones (RPZs), which are located beyond each runway end. Facilities that encourage the concentration of people should be prohibited within RPZs. At Ellington Airport, the RPZ beyond the south end of the runway extends off the airport property and includes a multifamily dwelling; this is a prohibited land use within a RPZ.

Endangered & Threatened Species

Both the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were contacted to obtain information regarding threatened and endangered (see Appendix G for agency correspondence).

The CTDEP NDDB responded in letters that report the presence of one State Species of Special Concern, the Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) within the vicinity of the airport. Savannah sparrow is a grassland-obligate species that requires open fields to breed, nest and forage. Any future state funded action at the airport will require further coordination with the CTDEP NDDB Wildlife Division.

The USFWS determined that there were no federally-listed or proposed, threatened or endangered species or critical habitat known within the project area, thus no further consultation is required for the Endangered Species Act.

Historic & Cultural Resources

A review of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) database determined that there are no NRHP cultural resources in the vicinity of Ellington Airport.

In addition to the NRHP database search, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO) was contacted to determine the level of archaeological sensitivity of the airport property and surrounding parcels (see Appendix G for agency correspondence). While the CTSHPO does not have any reported archeological resources within the property boundary, the topography and ecology setting suggests that there is a moderate to strong potential to contain

prehistoric period archeological resources. Thus, a professional cultural resource assessment is recommended if the Town acquires the airport property.

Wetlands

According to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) soils GIS data collected for the airport, there is only one area of wetlands on the airport property and that is located at the extreme northwestern corner of the property in the vicinity of the pond associated with Broad Brook. The wetland is approximately 1300 ± feet from the northern runway end and is classified as both a state (CTDEP) and federal (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) regulated wetland. To verify the actual limits and acreage of this wetland, the area may have to be delineated according to state and federal wetland delineation guidelines.

1.5 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted for this study on October 27, 2009. Appendix F summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Phase I ESA. The purpose of the Phase I ESA was to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs) on the airport property. The following RECs were identified (refer to Figure 1-1):

- Former and existing Underground Storage Tanks (UST) and Aboveground Storage Tanks (AST) located at the site.
- Documented groundwater contamination and an on-going remediation program associated with the groundwater contamination in the area of Facility 2.
- Use of the site for automotive and aviation repair services.
- Septic systems and the former discharge from floor drains within Facility 1, Facility 2, and Facility 6.
- Potential for soil and/or groundwater contamination in the proximity of Facility 6 resulting from the outdoor storage/disposal of vehicles, equipment, and miscellaneous debris.
- Potential impacts from up gradient industrial facilities located adjacent to the eastern side of the site.

Though, not considered RECs, based on the age of the site structures, asbestos-containing building materials and lead paint may be associated with the structures.

Prior to public acquisition of the Airport, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Complete a subsurface investigation consisting of the installation of soil borings and/or groundwater monitoring wells in the areas of concern, and the analysis of soil and/or groundwater samples for constituents of concern. Additional reports pertaining to previous investigations, remedial actions, and installation and operation of the existing remedial system should be obtained and reviewed.

2. The Connecticut Property Transfer Program requires the disclosure of environmental conditions when certain real properties are transferred. It is recommended that legal counsel review this Phase I ESA and provide the Town of Ellington with a written opinion as to the Transfer Act status of and additional filings that may be applicable.
3. The materials currently disposed/stored near Facility 6 should be removed and appropriately disposed. If evidence of contamination is identified, the impacted media should be sampled and analyzed for parameters of concern.
4. It should be ascertained if the USTs and ASTs in service at the site are properly registered. In addition, the airport should develop and implement a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan.
5. An Asbestos and Lead Paint Survey should be completed prior to any renovation or demolition of the suspected site structures.

1.6 Security Evaluation

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA)'s *Security Guidelines for General Aviation Airports* (May 2004), details suggested security guidelines for general aviation (GA) airports. The TSA's security guidelines are recommended (but not mandated) for GA airports. Currently, there are no specific State or Federal requirements for implementing such procedures. However, under Town of Ellington ownership, it is recommended that many of the TSA recommendations be implemented, with refinements specific to the needs of the Airport. These TSA recommendations are characteristic of the general size, location, and activity of the Airport. Appendix F provides the detailed Security Evaluation.

The TSA recommends that GA airports consider the potential benefit of the following:

- An Airport Security Committee
- An Airport Community Watch Program
- Secondary Aircraft Locking Devices
- Transient Pilot Sign-in/Sign-out Procedures
- Security Related Signs

In addition, a formal Security Procedures Document should be developed and provided to airport users that incorporates the following items and procedures:

- Law enforcement officer procedures
- Specific security procedures to be used by airport personnel and tenants
- Challenge procedures (for confronting unfamiliar individuals and suspicious activity)
- A procedure for pilots to positively identify all passengers and cargo
- A formal airport contact list with phone numbers (day/night)

Due to the small size of Ellington Airport and the aircraft types accommodated, the security recommendations do not include physical facilities (e.g., fencing, gates, surveillance systems) that are necessary at large airports.

1.7 Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting

Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) are personnel dedicated to respond to aircraft emergencies at an airport. They are trained to utilize specialized equipment and techniques unique to aircraft fire fighting. In some cases, these personnel also respond to local emergencies that are not associated with the airport. ARFF is requirement of a Part 139 certificate. As Ellington Airport does not have a Part 139 Certificate, ARFF is not required; the local fire department is able to handle emergencies at the airport.

1.8 Airport Activity

Through discussions with the airport owner and tenants, site visits, and review of the FAA's Airport Master Record, the 5010 Form, it is concluded that are a total of 31 based aircraft and 29,200 annual operations. There are 20 single-engine, five helicopters, and six ultralights. This information was used in the forecasts as the 2010 based year data.